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Atlantic Notes

"From our shores to yours"

Editorial



Dignity and justice for all of us

Maybe it was the original idea, all along. Fittingly December, the month that marks the season of reflection and giving, also brings with it the reminder that discrimination should not be part of our vocabulary any more -- whether the issue is disease, handicap, race, religion or other.

December 1st was World AIDS Day; De-

cember 5th marked International Volunteer Day and upcoming December 10 is International Human Rights Day, this year further celebrating the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Even though much work is yet to be done to consecrate equal rights across the globe, as Human Rights Commissioner Louise Arbor noted "It is difficult to imagine today just what a fundamental shift the Universal Declaration

of Human Rights represented when it was adopted sixty years ago."

The fact that the Declaration is now available in over 360 languages and is the most translated document in the world more than witnesses its universal nature.

In this edition, we share with you the belief that it belongs to each one of us and that every human being should claim it as his own. ●

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We Are All Disabled

The title may strike you as odd, yet it is profoundly true. Every person has a combination of abilities and disabilities, the difference lying in how severely such disabilities impact our capacity to engage in normal life experiences.

Depending on the disability and access to support, indirect effects can include reduced mobility, limited social access, more difficulty finding and/or performing a job, as well as difficulty taking care

of health, fitness and nutritional needs. Aware of this, the U.S. has long developed programs and legal protections to begin addressing these issues.

Since the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, which obligated government agencies to hire people with disabilities, Congress has passed 11 major laws to improve access to education, transportation, technology, and housing. In 1990, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) reinforced legal

protection for disabled citizens.

From presidents and members of Congress to civil rights organizations, attorneys, business people, philanthropists, medical and technical researchers, and grass-roots activists, innumerable people contributed ideas, examples, inspiration, and support.

If you are interested in knowing more, ask us for the Electronic Journal on this issue. ●

A CAROUSEL THAT WELCOMES ALL.

(FAIRFAX COUNTY PARKS FOUNDATION)





THE TRADITION OF
LIGHTING THE NA-
TIONAL CHRISTMAS
TREE AT THE WHITE
HOUSE DATES BACK
TO 1923, BUT WASN'T
ALWAYS POPULAR.



Did you know that...?

Franklin Pierce was the first president to have a Christmas tree in the White House, while Theodore Roosevelt remains the only one to have banned Christmas trees in the White House out of environmental concerns.

Little do we know of Christmas in the United States prior to 1870, when Congress passed legislation that made it a national holiday. George Washington allegedly observed the "first" American Christmas, having

grown so fond of it that he once described the season as "an event worthy of rousing cheers, song, pistol shots and firecrackers".

Official greetings were first sent in 1953 and since then all presidents have observed the tradition. Cards normally involve months of preparation under the First Lady and often go to over a million recipients around the world.

Personal style dictates the party. Thomas Jefferson

delighted party guests by playing the fiddle while; Andrew Jackson was known for engaging in an annual snowball fight. But perhaps one of the most unusual Christmas parties took place in 1857. Without a First Lady, James Buchanan was considered a "lonely man". He invited 30 American Indians. According to historic reports, the Pottowatomies arrived in "citizens dress" but the others "were in their grandest attire, and more than profuse of paint and feathers". ●

STATE of mind: MARYLAND

It is impossible not to be enchanted at first sight by Maryland. A year-round vacation destination located on the Eastern seaboard of the US, this state was once described by *National Geographic* as "America in Miniature. The state boasts a wealth of historical, cultural and tourist attractions for day-trippers and vacationers alike.



In the state where General George Washington resigned his command of the Continental Army, you can definitely feel the pull of history looking out over the Civil War battlefields of Antietam, walking the storied docks of capital Annapolis, or touring the birthplace of our nation's "Star-Spangled Banner" at Fort McHenry. Alternatively, you can sail the waters of Chesapeake Bay, try your hand surfing, fishing or boating, learn square dancing or indulge with some Smith Island Cake, the state dessert.

Maryland is famous for great seafood, especially crabs. During lunch hour on Maryland's Chesapeake Bay, vendors sell almost as many crab cakes as hot dogs and hamburgers combined. Paradise by another name. ●

WORLD-CLASS EVENTS,
SUCCULENT FOOD,
BREATH-taking
LANDSCAPE, FAMILY
FUN, SPECTATOR
SPORTS, ROMANTIC
GETAWAYS, AND
HISTORIC SITES -
MARYLAND WELCOMES
YOU IN A VARIETY OF
WAYS.

For more information, visit <http://www.maryland.gov>



Meet U.S. Consul-General Eugene Sweeney



A new consular tool to help assist procedures on travel to the United States was the excuse for a talk with the US Consul General to Portugal. Eugene

Sweeney and his team daily assist Americans and Portuguese in a number of ways, smoothing exchanges and keeping us all safer.

AN – One of the missions of any embassy is protection and assistance to its national citizens. Has that task proven more difficult since 9-11?

ES – In Portugal, it hasn't changed drastically since 9-11. Clearly there are increased security considerations regarding issuance of passports and visas that have made the process more involved for both Embassy staff and our public. But now we have more efficient and timely processes.

AN – What other services do you provide in the Consular Section in Lisbon?

ES – For U.S. citizens, services include passports; reports of birth; death certificates; consular certificates; statements for driver's licenses; and assistance with voting, notariats for use in the U.S., federal benefits matters, welfare and whereabouts, and more. For non-citizens, you can apply for a

temporary or immigrant visa, execute a notarial for use in the U.S., and, if qualified, request U.S. Federal Benefits assistance. We also have a Consulate in Ponta Delgada for residents of the Azores and a Consular Agency in Madeira.

AN – How would you characterize the American community living in Portugal?

ES – We estimate that the total number of US citizens in Portugal, including the islands, is near 20,000 people. While there are small communities of American expats concentrated in the Oporto, Lisbon/Cascais, and Algarve areas, by far the largest numbers of these American citizens are dual US - Portuguese nationals. Many emigrated from Portugal to the US in their productive years and then returned to retire in Portugal. We have a very active Federal Benefits Unit office in Portugal providing services to these Social Security beneficiaries, as well as to those living in five Lusophone African countries.

AN – An added procedure that is still in the voluntary phase will go into force as of January 2009. How would you explain The Electronic System for Travel Authorization to our readers?

ES – ESTA is an automated system that assists in determining eligibility to travel to

the US under the Visa Waiver Program (VWP), and whether such travel poses any law enforcement or security risk. Each approval will normally be valid for a 2- year period. Though ESTA will be mandatory for all VWP travelers to the US effective Jan. 12, 2009, we urge all VWP travelers to begin using the system immediately.

AN – Concern has been voiced about violation of privacy regarding this new tool. How would you comment on that?

ES – The information collected by ESTA is subject to the same privacy safeguards guaranteed by U.S. law as the information provided currently. .

AN – In terms of US-Portuguese relations, what would you say is your biggest challenge, as well as your easiest task as Consul General?

ES – Given the excellent long-standing relations, challenges can almost always be seen in a positive way. They usually involve an agreement to improve operations rather than anything negative. Right now, we are working with the Portuguese government to renew Portugal's eligibility for the Visa Waiver Program. We recently hosted an intense week long inter-agency visit led by Department of Homeland Security personnel. Cooperation with the Portuguese was excellent. My easiest task is therefore to make sure my visitors, official and otherwise, are happy. And Portugal, already is a phenomenal country! ●

THE JOY OF TRAVEL
SHOULD NOT BE
SPOILED BY LAST-
MINUTE
DIFFICULTIES AT
PORT OF ENTRY. THE
NEW ESTA VISA
PROCEDURES AIM AT
SMOOTHING THE US
EXPERIENCE . VISIT

[HTTP://PORTUGAL.](http://portugal.usembassy.gov)

[USEMBASSY.GOV](http://portugal.usembassy.gov)

OR

[HTTPS://](https://esta.cbp.dhs.gov/esta)

[ESTA.CBP.DHS.GOV/](https://esta.cbp.dhs.gov/esta)

[ESTA](https://esta.cbp.dhs.gov/esta)

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WE ARE ON THE WEB!

Please check out our new homepage at

<http://portugal.usembassy.gov>

Atlantic Notes and the Office of Public Affairs at U.S. Embassy Lisbon wish all our readers Happy Holidays and all the best for 2009, which we hope will be a great, brand new year full of continued good stories.



@ a Glance : A Touch of Gold

Before food and drink arrive at the table, dinner guests at the Ambassador's residence already have set their eyes on the tableware.

The history of the Department of State's representational supplies began with supplying sterling silver flatware to a select number of official residences under a contract with the Peruvian company Camusso in 1938.

After twenty years, the Department began to hear from tableware manufacturers in the United States wondering why the china and crystal used by US ambassadors came from overseas manufacturers. To address this issue, a contract was awarded to the American

company Syracuse China in 1969. Today, Pickard China supplies over 396 residences including chiefs of mission, deputy chiefs of mission, consuls general, and principal officers.



The 23-karat gold and the deep cobalt blue rim versions of Department of State official crested china are provided only for ambassadors' residences and in some special cases to diplomatic residences that are at the rank of ambassador but for political reasons are not connected to

an embassy. An example is the United States Interest Section in Havana, Cuba.

Official uncrested china is provided to deputy chiefs of mission, consuls general and principal officers.

Retired ambassadors, who have left public service, are allowed to purchase official crested china and glassware under special authorization.

Department of State china-ware must stand up to regular use at most residences and a heavy entertaining schedule at many of them.

After all, official chinaware is as much part of US Diplomatic History as cables and *démarches* ... only with a taste of its own. ●



OFTEN PAVING THE WAY FOR TREATIES AND HANDSHAKES BETWEEN ALLIES, OFFICIAL CHINAWARE IS AS MUCH PART OF U.S. DIPLOMATIC HISTORY AS CABLES AND DEMARCHES,